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For a Festive Home

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For A

Festive

Home

Ethel Overholt suggests evergreens and tapers as basic decorative materials

CHRISTMAS is the season for warmth and happiness, good cheer and fellowship. In merry old England, where traditions are handed down from generation to generation, the Yule candle is placed before a holly wreath, symbol of the Trinity. The inside of the wreath follows an endless circle—symbolizing eternity. The candle is artfully surrounded by branches of evergreen, which may be substituted for the holly in the wreath, upon which pine cones are laid. According to tradition, the huge Yule candles were lighted on Christmas Eve, placed in the position of highest honor and kept burning until Christmas night.

In both England and France, Christmas cheer was centered about the Yule log. On Christmas Eve it was brought into the house with much ceremony, lighted to the singing of carols and kept burning through the Yuletide. In modern living quarters it isn't always feasible to burn a real log, so a substitute has been suggested.

The modern Yule log, which may be used for a table centerpiece or mantel decoration, is made of cork bark from the florist, brightened with evergreen sprigs, cones and berries. The "flames" are stubby red candles pushed down over headless nails, driven part way into the log. To prevent the candles from cracking when pushed down over the nails, place the nails in boiling hot water for a few minutes. When warm, they penetrate easily without damaging the candles.

Why not start a few new customs this year when helping the family decorate for the holidays? A word of caution before you start: don't overdecorate a room. Choose a focal point and make it lovely. A logical place to start is the front door, for this is where friends will meet the first note of hospitality.

A welcoming note to guests will jingle from three or four bells tied with red ribbon to a billowy branch of pine, suspended from the front door knocker.

Long cardboard mailing tubes, procured at any stationer's shop, can be covered with white oilcloth and tied with red bows of the same weather-proof material. Standing in formal line on each side of the doorway with lighted candle bulbs in the tops, these cylinders add a gay touch of welcome.

If there are younger brothers and sisters at home, they will love a jolly snowman face, constructed of

white crepe paper or cotton, with flowing red ribbon bow-tie and saucy hat tilted over one eye.

Windows come in for their share of rejuvenation from twisted streamers (three or five look best) of red crepe paper or Cellophane hung with tiny white paper bells, draped from a gold star in the upper right-hand corner. Double windows, an eternal decorating problem, go Christmasy with a couple of grapelike bunches of evergreen down the middle, brightened with groups of scintillating bells.

Reproductions of masterpieces in the Madonna theme serve as points of interest above a wall table or mantel. Colored candles highlight the predominate color in the pictures. A picture with blue and white background is enhanced by blue candles in silver holders. Blue and silver Christmas balls laid on a bed of long-needled pine complete the arrangement.

Groups of three white candles, mounted on rectangular bases of paraffin, are separated by tiny hand-made Christmas trees of evergreen for a formal mantel arrangement. Paraffin is adaptable in creating decorations, for it is carved easily (with a knife warmed in hot water) into stars and other picturesque shapes.

Wooden salad bowls, usurped from the kitchen, provide excellent containers for evergreen and pine cone formations. Clear a center shelf of an open bookcase, leaving space for a miniature manger complete with Christ Child, and the Holy Family surrounding Him. On a soft padding of shredded green paper lay the tiny figures, which may be unified by a curving branch of evergreen over the entire setting.

Serene will stand a white Madonna when delicate angel figures worship at her feet. White candles and soft pines flank the figures in this mantel arrangement. A halo-like wreath of hawthorn fruits and holly will insure a composite group, tying the walls and figures together.

Evergreen branches and cones may be made white by applying casein mixed with water. This white powder may be obtained at the drug store. It retains its whiteness even out of doors. For indoor use, dip branches in laundry starch. In either case sprinkle with artificial snow before the branches dry. The coatings will glitter and adhere indefinitely. Don't forget the possibilities of Cellophane for demure angel placecards and gay seasonal centerpieces.